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ABSTRACT

Attention to teaching and developing spirituality in interpersonal communication is timely. Today's technology usurps the "human" in human being. Humankind is displaced by computers, e-mail, and various websites which substitute for the "person" in interpersonal communication. This technology, combined with the emergence of widespread cultural diversity, can result in a loss of personal identity. It is imperative for instructional communication educators to find a way to guide students through tangles of beliefs toward creating an identity which will encompass a broad spectrum of needs to meet the intricacies of diverse cultures, and individuals, in today's society. Spirituality transcends race, religion, and culture. A spiritual awareness needs to be impressed on students to effect a positive influence in their lives--to teach spirituality, the instructor must have intuition and insight into the student and understand the student's needs. The instructor must guide the student into integrity and maturity through the concept of abundance, and must also guide the student to learn to trust, to be open and respect other opinions. The student must make "agreements," contracts which have clear guidelines against which students "may measure their own success" in trusting and respecting their own and others' opinions. A series of 13 classroom activities helps students to follow steps in the development of spiritual interpersonal communication. The instructor can help instill the student with a sense of self-worth which is a recognition of that spirit within him or her and can assist in the birth of spirituality for maximum satisfaction in interpersonal communication. (Contains 11 references.) (NKA)

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Teaching Spirituality in Interpersonal Communication Course.

by H. Carolyn Franklin

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

TEACHING SPIRITUALITY IN THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

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Attention to teaching and developing spirituality in interpersonal communication is timely. "(Spirituality) is the new American advent, which is perhaps the advent of postmodernity...it is the advent of a new world in which everything we have known as Spirit or spirituality is invisible and unheard...most of all in the American academy one openly encounters our postmodern spirituality...in the mass media, the popular culture, the education, and even the politics of our new era" (Van Ness, 1996, p. 336). The author suggests that the era of theology has declined, that is theology as in scholarship, words. The light of the new spirituality exists in all dimensions of self and interpersonal communication. Organized religion is "disenfranchized from spirit...in spirituality, everything is reduced to that which most everyone can understand." This "understanding" is founded on feelings, a caring for self and others. American society is moving toward an "advent...of world spirituality"; teachers must encourage students in their "spiritual quest" (p. 336).

Today's technology usurps the "human" in human being. Humankind is displaced by computers, E-mail and various websites which substitute for the "person" in interpersonal communication. This inhuman interaction, machines talking to machines, supports the observation that the quality of communication displays "an alarming state of deterioration" (Pearce, & Littlejohn. 1997, p. 88).

This technology, combined with the emergence of widespread cultural diversity, can result in a loss of personal identity; we are no longer "us", we are "other"; each culture appears estranged from self (p. 102). As diverse cultures merge in the established mode of society, a tangle of languages, values, ideologies and traditions ensues. Each culture must adapt some of its beliefs and values and adjust, somewhat, to others' "exotic" traditions. An adjustment of beliefs is critical if we are to live harmoniously and guarantee the "pursuit of happiness" for all. But, also, adjustments can result in a loss of identity limiting a culture's ability to communicate - if we don't know who we are, how do we communicate? Without identity and mutual agreement by communication, society may dissolve into chaos.

It is imperative that those, who are in the instructional communication field find find a way to guide each student through these tangles of beliefs toward creating an identity which will encompass a broad spectrum of needs in order to meet the intricacies of diverse cultures, and also individuals, in today's society. The problem is complex. For example, if an individual chooses to identify with a specific religion, life-style or gender that is not in accord with the mainstream

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culture, he/she runs the risk of being an "other", of being "different" and not accepted. Therefore it is a challenge for teachers to find a factor in identity that is common and acceptable to most students; an identity that will allow them their uniqueness and yet will ensure each individual access to quality interpersonal communication. This challenge is largely the task of teachers as they have access to a multitude of young and impressionable minds. Hopefully, this "quality" interpersonal communication taught, developed and encouraged in students, will assist in a positive merging of divergent beliefs in society.

Spirituality is such a factor; it transcends race, religion and culture. A spiritual awareness needs to be impressed on students to effect a positive influence in their life; it is a way of thinking, being and living. Thus to teach spiritualty and effect positive influence in a student's life, the instructor must have intuition and insight into the student and understand the student's needs.

Since the quest for spirituality is altruistic and elusive, the teacher needs to address some pragmatic questions; What is spirituality? Why does the student need to create an inner spiritual awareness? How is it taught? And, how does one know when the student has acquired this spiritual awareness?

What spirituality is.

Webster (1970) defines spiritual as "...of the soul; concerned with the intellect; ascendency of spirit; refinement of thought and feeling." Spirituality, defined, is "...spiritual in character, quality or nature" (p. 1373). Definitions, at best, usually leave much to the imagination. Spirituality, in itself, cannot be obsrved, therefore, it can not be measured, repeated, tested nor compared; it is a state of being, unique to each individual.

Given the above conditions of spirituality, how do we know it exists at all? Certainly dictionaries are not sources of "truth", but merely references, guides, to states and conditions.

The Bible and the Koran, two highly respected writings accepted by millions of people as being divinely inspired, both refer to the spirituality of humankind. In Ephesians, Paul writes that "...through Christ we have every spiritual blessing bestowed upon us (Eph 1:3)." It is written in the Koran that when Allah completed man, Allah brought man to life, as he "breathed into him of my spirit (15:29)." And Buddha, a teacher millions of people consider is the embodiment of divine wisdom and virtue, spoke of spirituality as that assence which connects us to the "inner meaning" of being (Suzuki, 1956, p. 126).

We all, by virtue of existence, have "spirit", but "spirituality" is the quality of spirit which, for many of us, must be re-vitalized and nurtured. An instructor needs

to be experienced, preferably divinely inspired, in order to nurture spirituality in students.

Why students should want spirituality.

In a world saturated with artificial means of communication, a world where exotic languages and customs besiege and cleve cultures, it is essential to relate to one's fellow humans on some personal level of communication. We are social beings and, for the average person, some degree of companionship enriches our lives.

The personal level of communication which enriches us, humanizes us, is spirituality. We must understand our basic needs and relate on that level. "...human beings have three 'interpersonal needs' that must be met...these needs are...inclusion, affection and control..." (Pearce, 1994, p. 210). Inclusion is the desire, or need, to be part of a social group; it provides comfort and identity. Affection means we must have something to love, even if we, ourselves, are not loved. Hate begets hate, but to give love is a natural desire (p. 211). Control does not mean manipulation, but the ability to be visable among those we admire, to have an effect (positive or negative) on other people (p. 210).

If the three levels are met in the cognitive realm, the student will have "moral order" and live in a world free from "acrimonious quarrels" and "unnecessary error and unnecessary peril" (pearce, 1989. p. xiii). Moral order could be the door that opens onto spirituality.

"There is a revival of interest in practical ethics (and) increased interest in...ethics of virtue (and) in ethics of need and love..." (Noddings, 1988, p. 218). This "ethical orientation...may be called relational ethics... which are rooted in...natural caring" (p. 219). Natural caring is further defined as responding to the "needs, wants and initiations of others" (p. 219). By utilizing natural caring from this perspective, the development of spirituality may be encouraged by teachers and students by mutually constructing objectives, as teachers have an "obligation to support, anticipate, evaluate and encourage worthwhile activities...so students may live compassionately...be admired, trusted and respected" (p. 221). We, as teachers and members of society, are encouraged to "work toward the development of decent, caring, loved and loving persons" (p. 226).

The world is "sufficiently complicated" and "exciting" that it need not spend its time in the "tangles of misunderstandings." By infusing spirituality into interpersonal communication, the student will exist in a "happy state of reciprocal understanding" (Pearce, p. xiv). As the student further practices and understands the value of spirituality, "the best that can happen is a major step forward in our understanding of ourselves that will reconstruct social institutions as well as informal ways of

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treating each other" (p. xx).

How we can teach spirituality.

As written by Akio Tanii:

"Change of thought makes your behavior change
"Change of behavior makes your habits change
"Change of habit makes your personality change
"Change of personality makes your destiny change."
(Ni, 1997, p. 36)

Change comes from within; try as we might, with the best of intentions, we, as teachers, even by the best models of behavior, cannot always effect spiritual change. We must be receptive to what a student is willing to do or change. We seek to call forth an essence, an, as yet, undiscovered quality, which will flow forth and touch others, enriching all who are touched. In meaningful interpersonal communication this essence ties bonds in brotherhood and infuses interpersonal interaction with goodwill. The teacher needs to rely on insight, intuition, and experience for this task. And, we must be conscious of constraints imposed upon us as teachers; we are limited by language, by past experiences and by social expectations. As teachers, we must be vigilant not to impute our needs, beliefs and standards on the students, and decide whether or not a student has, or has not, advanced on the goal to spirituality. This perception may well be inaccurate. "The teacher...brings his or her own subjectivity into active play in the relation, but also takes responsibility for directing the student's attention to the objective conditions of choice and judgement; both teacher and student are influenced by and influence the subjectivity of other agents. Hence in a crucial sense, each of us is a relationally defined entity and not an autonomous agent. Our goodness and our wickedness are both, at the least part, induced, supported, enhanced or diminished by the interventions and influence of those with whom we are related" (Noddings, p. 222).

As we teachers approach change in the student's spiritual awareness, we do not "make hypotheses"; we "observe the world and describe the relationships among variables" (Pearce, 1989, p. 11). We must stand back from the process and observe; "...one sees what one expects to see, but one's expectations affect what one sees," which is "reconstructed logic" (p. 12). We must set aside expectations. Reconstructed logic helps keep the instructor grounded. It is that logic which we humans use to explain phenomena. We may, initially, have expectations, but spirituality is unmeasureable and unpredictable. We teachers cannot have hypotheses, an if-then deduction; we must explain after the fact - if we can explain at all.

The self is "constructed by patterns of conversations..." (Pearce, 1994, p. 221). Sometimes these conversations are "incommensurate language games...that create personal identity"

(p. 248). But, perhaps because of our lack of experience with, or lack of facility, in using language, we "stumble in confusion over our identity" (p. 250). These constructed "patterns of conversations" describe behavior, attitude, personal appearance and abilities. It is those constructs imposed upon us by society to which we listen and form beliefs of self and other. If these conversations were to be based in spirituality only the best qualities of self would emerge and we would not stumble in confusion over our identity.

It is the task of the dedicated instructor to recognize this "stumbling" over language and assist in clarifying thoughts and feelings. The student needs to understand that there may be a disparity bewteen the way the student perceives him or her self, and the personality which has been constructed by society. These imposed identities may not allow expression of deeper feelings or abilities the student innately holds. Certain conversational phrases such as: "That's just like him/her." Or, "In a situation like that, what can you expect from him/her." And, "Well, that's the way they are. I knew they would do that" (p. 252), distort the student's perception of self and, perhaps cause that student to engage in a life style which is alien to his/her spiritual being.

These phrases are insidious and damaging to the development of one's spiritual identity. The assumption is made that behavior is predictable, immutable and willful. The inference is that the student has no choices, no means of change; he/she is doomed to plow through life on the losing team. Such phrases shrivel the fiber of the student's spirit and may destroy motivation and learning.

It is possible that the observer and speaker of such dire predictions is seeing his/her reflection in the student's behavior as in a glass darkly. Judgements must be set aside; predictions and expectations must be set aside. How else will spirituality flourish except in complete aceptance of the student?

As instructors, we must keep in mind the "...ways of being human are co-constructed in all those events where we interact with each other...we must bring about social relations in which mutuality predominates..." (Pearce, 1989, p. xxi).

There is a tendency among disparate peoples for "real selfishness, an unwillingness to cooperate, a resistance to authority, defensive communication" (Covey, p. 205). We are disparate peoples; each of us has different experiences, different beliefs, values and needs. Bringing people to a union in spirituality is a challenging endeaver. But, one method to achieve unity and agreement among people, is to create situations in which both sides win.

According to Stephen Covey, "Rewards are much greater when people cooperate" (p. 206). He refers to three dimensions of winning wherein, by cooperation, everyone is rewarded by gaining respect and a more positive self-image. His win/win dimensions develop spirituality, saves face, maintains dignity and uncovers the best qualities in self and others. This win/win

dimensions develop spirituality, saves face, maintains dignity and uncovers the best qualities in self and others. This win/win dimension is spiritually evidenced (pp. 220 - 234). The first dimension is "Character." We must guide the student into integrity and maturity though the concept of abundance; there is plenty of everything for all of us - if we share. The Second dimension is "Relationships." We must guide the guide the student to learn to trust, to be open and respect other opinions, however, not in the sense the student is obligated to accept those opinions. In the third dimension, the student must make "Agreements," contracts, which have clear guidelines against which students "may measure their own success" in trusting and respecting their own and others' opinions (p. 223).

Classroom activities

(These steps in the development of spiritual interpersonal communication are from the textbooks and lectures of Preston Ni, instructor at Foothill College, Los Altos, CA.)

At the beginning of each class, Mr. Ni has the students take part in "mindful breathing." These are deep-breathing meditations which help the student to focus his/her thoughts and center themselves.

For deep breathing, first, lower the lights and have as little noise or distraction as possible. Next, have the students sit on the floor, or chair if they prefer, close their eyes and try to let all thoughts leave the mind. Then, the students should breathe as deeply and as quietly as possible for about 10 minutes. To close the deep breathing exercises, count to three aloud and then turn up the lights.

Method

1. Provide the students with a reading list of inspirational novels (available from Mr. Ni).
2. Ask the student to define his/her goals; why are these particular goals chosen? Are they the student's choices, or those of the parents or the expectations of society?
3. Ask the student to list the steps in achieving these goals; i.e., time constraints, financing, transportation, availability of courses, etc.
4. Ask the student to explain the motivations behind the goals
   Discuss the appropriateness of the motivations.
5. Ask the student to explain what expectations he/she has of him/herself; what are the parent's expectations and peer group expectations.
   Discuss the expectations as to realistic or not.
6. Ask the student to list 6 things he/she would like to be appreciated for.
   Discuss the list.
7. Ask the student to list his closest family and friends. Then have the student list what he/she appreciates most about each of these persons.

This would work well in group discussions.

8. Ask each student to give an oral presentation describing his/her cultural background. Then give another presentation as to his/her challenge in life or the student's personal vision of how to improve the world.
   A class discussion should follow each talk.
9. Ask the student to write four short essays: (1) His/her self concept. How did they get this way. How do they feel about it. (2) What does the student wish to disclose that he/she would want to change in some way. (3) Have the student define self-esteem and explain the position of his/her self esteem among family and friends. (4). Ask the student to explain his/her position of the relationships in the family and peer group. Ask the student to explain what might be changed for the better.
   These disclosures should be private.
10. Explain to the student about choices in life and how to change perspectives.
   Have a class discussion on ideas of how to change.
11. Have the students sit in groups of three. Ask them to hold hands and meditate on each other. Ask them to focus on goodwill for each other in the group. In class discussion ask what feelings or awareness they may have experienced.
12. Ask the students to write a poem describing some spiritual experience, some deep feeling, they may have felt. This experience might be a sunset, a trip on a sailboat, or a favorite season of the year.
13. At the conclusion of the course, ask each student to write a note to each other student in the class. The notes should tell the receiving-student his/her good points and what were their contributions to the class.

This exercise is particularly successful and popular with the students. They look forward to giving the letters, but they especially look forward to receiving them.

Great Barton First School in Suffolk, England, has a tradition of innovative teaching. Teacher Liz Babbedge attended the Millennium Commission in Oxford (1998) which funded a spiritual development project. This project gives children (ages 6-9) an opportunity to "develop socially, culturally and spiritually" (Times Educational Supplement, 1998, p. 22). According to Babbedge "Spirituality is hard to define and difficult, if not impossible to assess. However, even if it cannot be rigidly charted, spiritual development can be allowed for, through giving children time to reflect, consider, dream and challenge. Spiritual development is like the ring in a doughnut, the 'hole' is integral to the 'whole.' Pupils need that 'vital space' at the centre to be left unfilled by the prescriptions of others; they need time to set apart from the constraints of busy, mundane life; they need a place where (they) can encounter 'what makes us us'."

"Such profundities daunt many teachers," but Babbedge observes "The classroom comes alive and you can find that they start private debates about (spirituality)." Even though the teacher must appear neutral, Babbedge observes that the children develop skills of rapport and empathy. The article concludes with Babbedge noting, "The more interested and open I have attempted to be when teaching...the more I have learned professionally and, dare I say it. spiritually, too. But in some ways I know less, too." This is evidence of spirituality in teaching interpersonal communication.

The Great Barton First School is evidence that teaching spirituality in interpersonal communication benefits both student and teacher.

How to know if the student experiences spirituality.

To understand that, we turn to the experts on spirituality, "There is no way in which we can get into the mind of another person....We have no direct access to another person's resources, only their practices. We infer what they mean by what they say" (Pearce, 1989, p. 92). This is that "deeper spiritual quest (that) all too significantly our great modern visionary seers have overlooked" (Van Ness, p. 336). Perhaps by "seers" the author refers to the religious leaders of today who may be too far from the mainstream population, and, hence, are not reachable by the student, either in location nor content. And also, perhaps, until now, the modern seers have been "virtually ignored" by the mainstream since their message may not be recognizable as "spiritual".

For example, the new social movement of postmodern spirituality includes "holistic health practices, contemporary psychotherapies, feminist and gay spirituality, social justice struggles, a new scientific inquiry, naturalistic recreations, ecological activism, the arts, sports and games. Spirit itself is apprehended as being incarnate in our most ordinary and banal experience..." (p. 336).

Van Ness alludes to the renaissance of the arts in the quest for spirituality. John Dickson (1997) specifically includes music in the spiritual realm. The concept of pedegogues in interpersonal instructional communication could easily include those teachers of the arts, music, art, graphics, photography, etc. Dickson suggests that the physical closeness of the audience at a concert, and the feeling of the music, "expresses a crisis of identity...which is a sign of a search for meaning and depth of personal spirituality and even a personal expression of...faith commitment and outlook" (p. 323). "Music becomes a symbol...in which our rational and affective worlds are united and the world of spirit perceived, and thus our humanity is realized" (p. 328).

Dickson defines spirituality as, "the expression of a person's concern for the inner world of the soul, or deeper values, (which) is now in common use in educational circles

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as an important dimension to be encouraged in the personal development of young people" (p. 327). Dickson observes that adolescents need a period of "moratorium," an emotional hiatus during pubescence when they attempt to cope with what may be, overwhelming, physical and psychological changes in themselves and the fear of facing impending adulthood (p. 325).

By observing the student (adolescent) express a need for spirituality through the medium of music, Erik H. Erikson understood that students needed to realize the feeling of spirituality at times other than when they were at concerts. He designed a list of "tasks" for the student to use during the hiatus. This list is a guide for the pedegogue to help the student find a "final identity" (p. 325). This identity would be based in spirituality.

The list of tasks is to:

1. Develop a sense of faith and trust.
2. Develop the ability to will freely.
3. Develop creative use of their imagination and ambition.
4. Learn how to make something work.
5. Learn to avoid cynicism and fear of mistakes.
6. Accept permission to make decisions,
7. Learn to gauge who is/is not your friend.
8. Feel that the gifts they give to the world are valuable and worthy of praise.

If the student exhibits "...an awareness of alternatives ...a knowledge of what can be done to improve life....(p. 29), then we, as pedagogues can be somewhat satisfied we have made a difference in his/her life, and, hence the universe. A student should be able to re-script the "constructed patterns of conversation," observe one's self from varying positions of behavior and understand how needs and emotions affect judgement. Through understanding and careful re-scripting of our past life experiences, can we attain spirituality in interpersonal interaction. We attempt to provide the student with an awareness of choice, a sense of self, a method to shift paradigms, "When paradigms change, the world changes with them" (p. 13).

Through this awareness we instill the student with a sense of self-worth which is a recognition of that spirit within him/her. We assist in the birth of their spirituality for maximum satisfaction in interpersonal communication.

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